SECTION TWO

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A LIFE SKETCH OF THOMAS H. BALL

Houston, Texas, March 29.—When Col. Thomas H. Ball was a barefooted boy on a plantation near Huntsville, Texas, in Walker, county, 55 years ago, he formed a mighty resolution, that, upon reaching manhood's estate he would do these things:

Have all the amunition he needed to hunt rabbits; never allow a "second table" for the children at his house, and serve peach cobbler three times each day; ride mustang ponies and mules to his heart's content—and be a great lawyer.

In the main, Col. Ball has accomplished those ambitions, to say nothing of being the only man in Texas that the prohibitionists have ever agreed upon for Governor—or anything else. It is true that peach cobbler and rabbit hunting and riding mustang ponies and mules are not viewed by Col. Ball with that glamour they possessed for boyish vision, but everybody admits that he is "some pumpkins" as a lawyer. And, if he desired, he could realize the other boyhood dreams as well, and have an arsenal of ammunition, and a restaurant full of peach cobbler, or ride a whole herd of mules and mustang ponies if he wanted—but he doesn't want to.

The fact is that rabbit hunting has received its just deserts. A certain redoubtable Colonel put lion hunting on the map, so to speak, but the rabbit hunting somehow or other doesn't seem to have come in for its share of attention, for Ball long ago abandoned that idea of becoming a great rabbit hunter, finding perhaps that it would interfere somewhat with his plan for becoming a great lawyer; but it is certain nevertheless, that the bare-foot Walker county rabbit-hunter learned a lesson that throughout life has been a guiding star to the man.

"Be Sure You Are Right," Etc.

It was like this: These things happened just after the war, you understand, and money and ammunition were mighty scarce. Young Tom Ball went to school all week and worked in a grist mill each Saturday afternoon, receiving two-bits for that service. With this money he bought powder and shot wherewith to feed his muzzle-loader and down the nimble rabbit the following Saturday morning. That was his program—school all week, hunt rabbits Saturday morning and work all Saturday afternoon to provide ammunition for the following Saturday.

Now, in a certain blackjack grove plantation about five miles from Huntsville, Tom and his faithful dog, "Watch," could always scare up a few rabbits. But ammunition was mighty scarce—and quarters wherewith to purchase ammunition came hard, so he learned to conserve the supply. Young Ball never wasted a shot. He didn't monkey around and blaze about promiscously. When the old muzzle-loader cracked down you could be pretty sure that he had a bead on a rabbit.

And this circumstance of youth played a considerable part in forming the character of the man who has been named as the progressive prohibition Democratic choice for governor of Texas—all his life he has been avoiding waste of ammunition. He never shoots until the game is in sight.

In the Dollar Class

The grist mill where Tom worked on Saturday afternoons was run by Bob Yoakum, a son of Henderson Yoakum, the historian. There are limitations attendant upon a weekly income of 25 cents, and accordingly, Tom was greatly elated when Mr. Yoakum announced that he expected to go away for a day pretty soon, and that he would leave the boy in charge of the mill and pay him a whole round dollar for his services! The date was indefinite, but Tom accepted the proposition heartily.

About this time the International & Great Northern railroad was built into Huntsville, and preparations were made for a big Saturday picnic, not far from town. An excursion was to be run on the new road. Tom had never ridden on a railroad train, and for weeks he lay awake at night, trying to imagine the experience and planning to abandon the rabbit chase for that day, and with old "Watch" go to the picnic instead.

On Friday night before the picnic he went to bed early, but his eyes were wide with visions of the morrow, just then his Uncle Sidney came in—his only uncle not killed in the Civil war—came in with the mill keys, saying Yoakum had sent them, with the message that he was going away the next day, and had an agreement for Tom Ball to run the mill.

Business Before Pleasure

A sob rose in the boy's throat,—but he turned his head to the pillow and smothered it. Where now all those delectable visions of the morrow that fancy had conjured up but a moment ago? He wanted to go to that picnic,—wanted to ride on a railroad train, for he'd never ridden on one, and the longing was more poignant than any desire his boyish brain had ever conceived,—but he had promised Henderson to take the mill whenever he went away, and if it wasn't attended to the people couldn't get their grain ground.

Uncle Sidney and Yoakum should have fixed a definite date, said his Uncle Sidney, and that he believed that Tom would be justified in going to the picnic if he wanted to. The that he gave enough to take care of boy tossed on his little bed for hours—fighting it out there in the darkness. * * *

And next morning he got up early and went to the mill and ran it all day. People on their way to the picnic passed right by the mill. The railroad train, puffing gorgeously, its whistle shrieking and bell clanging the most seductive music he had ever heard, steamed along in full view of the little miller. He earned a dollar that day—the first dollar he had ever earned—and the hardest. Long years of activity in big affairs of Texas have brought varied experiences to the man, but never a disappointment more keen, nor a sacrifice to duty demanding so severe a struggle as the barefoot boy knew that picnic day.

But the people got their meal, and therein was satisfaction.

Answers Another Call

That boy has grown into a six-foot two-inch, 225-pound man. His hair and mustache are iron-gray; his features finely chiseled, furrows of deep thought are on his brow, and little lines of laughter about his eyes—those eyes that appraise one very keenly. His voice has a deep, vibrant tone. He speaks slowly and weighs his words—and when he has said something that pleases both himself and his hearers, he gives his mustache a quick, nervous pull and a smile steal forth and sweeps his countenance.

The prohibitionists of Texas have said they want this man to be the next governor of Texas, and he has just retired from one of the most lucrative law firms in Texas to become a candidate in response to this demand.

As he was walking up Main street in Houston, this afternoon, a woman from the passing crowd stepped out and touched him on the arm. She was plainly dressed; her face was a troubled one. "You don't know me, Colonel Ball," she said, "I am Mrs. ——" and then she told that story that runs through so many pitiful variations—the story of a home blasted by a saloon. "There are ten thousand women all over Texas who are praying for you, Col. Ball. I just wanted to stop you and tell you that," she concluded simply.

The people were passing by on Main street, and some in the crowd were speaking to Col. Ball. But he didn't see them, his eyes were filled with tears. We walked a block and then he turned to this writer and said, huskily:

"They can say that prohibition shouldn't be an issue—I'd rather have that woman's prayers,—I'd rather make that woman happy, and keep other lives from being wrecked as hers has been, though they holler it's not an issue through all eternity!"

Memories of Childhood

Col. Ball was born on a plantation near Huntsville in 1859. His mother was an Alabamian and his father a Virginian. His father, who was a Methodist minister, came to Texas to take charge of Andrews' Female College. Austin College (where Tom Ball was later educated) was also at Huntsville, and these two were then the leading educational institutions of Texas.

The father died while Tom was yet an infant; his mother died when he was seven, and he was raised by his uncle, Lieut. J. S. Spivey, of Hood's Texas Brigade—the only one of his mother's four brothers who returned from the war. Col. Ball can just remember the scene when all the negroes of the plantation were assembled on the big porch and told they were free. He also has a faint recollection of the picturesque figure, with great white beaver hat, that he saw upon the streets of Huntsville when he was a very little lad—the picturesque figure being none other than Gen. Sam Houston. And he has memories of family gatherings of aunts and cousins in the city of Huntsville—when there would always be peach cobbler for dinner, and the children had to play out under the chinaberry trees and wait for the "second table," which accounts for some of the early resolutions heretofore set forth.

Ambition to be a Lawyer

The year his mother died Tom Ball started to a private school in Huntsville. When he was 16 or 17 years old, he began to spend his spare time going to the court house and public speakings and listening to the arguments and other orations of the lawyers. Huntsville had a brilliant bar during that period—men whose names are outstanding in the pages of Texas history. And it was then that Tom Ball determined that he would be a lawyer.

He never deviated from that goal, although circumstances directed him away from its realization for a long time. His Uncle Sidney placed him in Austin College, where he finished when he was about 18, and announced to his uncle that he intended to commence making his own living, and to support himself from that time on. He could find no employment in town and went to work as a farm hand at a wage of $12.50 per month. He worked on the farm at that salary for two years, continuing to study at night. One year the crops he was working couldn't pay the $12.50 even, but Ball stayed on the job—and got his money later on.

Finally, he was offered a place in the store of Byrd Eastham, in Huntsville. He accepted this and studied four nights a week under his old professor at Austin College, reviewing his Latin and Greek, and reading elementary law. A kinsman, Richard C. Moncure, a Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals in Virginia, to whom the youth wrote for advice, suggested himself for three years before he attempted to practice law. Young Ball decided to take his advice, and just at this time was offered a job, through his old Huntsville friend, with Leon & H. Blum, of Galveston, Texas, a large wholesale firm.

Becomes a Traveling Salesman

He started out as a traveling salesman for this company when he was 21 years of age. He built up a splendid trade, working upon a straight salary and commission. His success in this line was pronounced from the beginning, and during the first 9½ months that he was upon the road he made $2,700 for himself. He remained with the company four years, establishing a record as a traveling salesman that up to that time had never been approached in that section. He traveled over Central and East Texas, selling boots, shoes and dry goods, and filled a guaranty of $250,000 worth of business in the last year of his work, this not including orders sent in from his territory, but of business secured directly by himself upon his memorandum books.

In the meantime, he had bought an interest in a mercantile firm at Huntsville. He ran this business for three years, reading law at spare moments, and in 1885 sold out his share of the business and went to the University of Virginia to attend law lectures. The same year he was admitted to the bar and returned to Huntsville and formed a partnership with Hon. Ben Campbell, then District Attorney at Huntsville and now mayor of the City of Houston. In 1892, Mr. Campbell withdrew from the firm and moved to Houston, but Col. Ball continued to practice at Huntsville.

In 1893, Gov. Hogg offered him a district judgeship, but he declined it, preferring practice to the bench. He served as mayor of Huntsville for six years and as president of the local school board an equal time. During his administration the first bond issue for a school building in that section was ordered. All these years Col. Ball was a member of the local board of the Sam Houston Normal, his activities always having an inclination along educational lines.

Sent to Congress

In 1896 he was nominated and elected to congress from the old First District, succeeding Captain J. C. Hutcheson, then and now of Houston. He took his seat in the lower house in March, 1897, and enjoyed the unusual privilege of immediate appointment on the Rivers and Harbors Committee and the Committee on Revision of Laws.

Col. Ball served on the Rivers and Harbors Committee continuously during the seven years he spent in congress. Improvements at Galveston harbor, and other coastal works and improvements of Texas rivers, were subjects of paramount importance in the rivers and harbors bills during those years. It was Col. Ball's intention not to accept a fourth nomination to congress but the rivers and harbors bill was talked to death in the closing hours of the 57th congress by Senator Carter and others, and Col. Ball accpeted the nomination with the understanding that when the Texas items, including the Houston ship canal project, were restored to the bill and taken care of, he would resign. This he did in 1903, entering into a law partnership with Judge Frank Andrews, of Houston, where he has resided since. Incidentally, at the time Col. Ball resigned his seat in Washington, it was believed by those in touch with the situation, had he remained, he would have succeeded John Sharpe Williams as leader of the minority in the house, when the latter retired.

Col. Ball was married in 1882 to Miss Thomasson, of Huntsville—two daughters and a son being born to them.

Work in Convention

He has been a delegate to every state Democratic Convention since 1884, and to every national convention since 1892. He has been a member of the platform committee of most of these conventions, both state and national, and has written some of the vital planks of the platform, in both state and national campaigns.

"The big Baltimore Convention was mightily to my liking," he mused, "but there will never be another scene on the floor of a convention equalling that at Chicago, when Bryan made his wonderful 'Cross of Gold' speech. I'll never forget how Col. Bill Sterrett sat at the press table, with tears streaming down his face, so moved was he by Bryan's utterances. And even as he was wiping the tears away, Col. Sterrett turned to our delegation, nearby, and in his characteristic way began to berate himself for letting that 'boy orator make a fool out of him.'"

"The Fort Worth Elimination Convention was a pretty interesting affair itself, wasn't it, Colonel?" he was asked.

"Well, yes, that was a very nice convention," agreed Col Ball, heartily.

Go to some church, Sunday, Apr. 19.

INDIVIDUALISM

How many people of your acquaintance are willing to allow you to exercise the same rights and ideas that they would like to take to themselves?

We doubt very much if you know as many as a dozen men liberal enough to grant each and every person the right of individualism that is so dear to the hearts of the average person.

Individualism is that God-given quality by which we differentiate man from the brute creation. It is one of the inalienable rights of the race, and any trespass against this principle is bound to work to the hurt, not only of the individual affected, but to the community as well.

Intolerance and bigotry have been the cause of more sorrow and heartaches than all wars or pestilences that the world has ever experienced. One of the characteristics of the truly great is tolerance—tolerance toward the rights of ones fellows, to his ideas, his creeds, his individualism.

It's a truism: every question has two sides, and those who are able to see but their own side of a question are bigots, lacking the finer qualities of those who hope for advancement. The greater the diversity of opinion, in these United States of ours, the greater will be our advancement along all lines, and the greater our security as citizens.

Intolerance was behind the reign of terror; intolerance was behind the movement of the Spanish armada; intolerance was behind the causes that led up to the Revolutionary and Civil wars; intolerance was the cause of the crucifixion of Christ—intolerance is, and always has been, behind every movement that would curtail the growth of the individual, and it will continue to be until the end of time.

The most sublime characteristic that one might possibly possess is tolerance. We should cultivate this quality of mind. We should strive to broaden its meaning. We should not so far lose sight of the rights of others as to feel that every man who does not see through our glasses is either a dolt or an outright knave.

Life has many angles. For one person to get a correct perspective of the whole show is out of the question, but we can learn much if we will only grant the other fellow some privilege to individual expression, and it is the way—the only way—to keep down our ego, our intolerance.

Grant us, O, Lord, individualism.

Go to some church, Sunday, Apr. 19.

R. W. SMITH'S CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

William Robert Smith, who has been in congress as representative of the 16th Congressional District since March 4, 1903, is one of those public servants who has won the confidence of the whole congress, as well as of the people of his district. His success is due to the exercise of those qualities of statesmanship that have enabled him to take a leading position on all great national questions, without however, slighting or becoming unmindful of the simplest needs of his immediate constituents.

It takes a man of commanding influence in congress to accomplish the more important things that Congressman Smith has achieved, and courage, common sense and integrity are the things that lift a congressman above the average membership of the house, and make it possible, even though an opposing political party be in control, for him to get what he goes after.

In congress Judge Smith is regarded as an authority, particularly on the tariff, on anti-trust legislation and railroad rate regulation. He is consistently and steadfastly progressive. Some Democrats are progressive in spots, but Congressman Smith has "come clean" in his progressiveness. He was progressive in the boss-ridden days before Woodrow Wilson cast down the corrupt politicians of his party and William Jennings Bryan purged the Baltimore convention of the influence of Wall street. It is needless to say, that William Robert Smith was an original Wilson man, and was among the first members of congress to declare for the New Jersey Governor for President.

But long before the momentous turn in the tide of American politics, which has naturally made his one of the strong hands that uphold the progressive administration of President Wilson, Congressman Smith won a measure of distinction in the house of representatives that enabled him to bring from a Republican congress two great boons—one particularly for Texas, and the other for the whole South.

The first feat referred to was to amend the Reclamation Act, so as to extend to Texas the benefits of the national reclamation law, which set aside the proceeds from the sale of public lands in the Western states for the construction of vast irrigation projects in public land states.

Congressman Smith faced a doubly arduous task, because for one thing, Texas has no public lands, and consequently contributes nothing to the reclamation fund; and also, because Texas is a solidly Democratic state, and had learned to expect small comfort from an over-whelmingly Republican congress. So hopeless did the situation appear, that no Texan had ever undertaken to win this great boon for his state. But such was Congressman's Smith's standing with his legislative colleagues, and so effectively did he present his case to both President Roosevelt and congress, that the Smith bill was adopted, and Texas was placed on an equal footing with other Western states in the enjoyment of the provisions of this act.

The second important law that Congressman Smith put through a Republican congress was for the inauguration by the federal government of a campaign to eradicate the cattle tick. The work that the federal government has done throughout the South as the result of Congressman Smith's first appropriation for tick eradication six years ago, has been a blessing to cattlemen throughout the South.

Congressman Smith's work in behalf of these two legislative achievements, has kept him busy ever since. He is constantly called upon by cattlemen everywhere to protect the cattle interests before the Department of Agriculture, with its ever shifting rules and regulations affecting the cattle industry, while his connection with the problems of reclamation has resulted in calling him to the chairmanship of the important Committee on Irrigation of Arid Lands.

The extension under the Smith bill of the provisions of the Reclamation Act to Texas has already begun to bear rich fruit for West Texas. First came the Elephant Butte Irrigation project in New Mexico, by which 80,000 acres of arid land in New Mexico will be turned into an oasis. This $9,000,000 project resulted from the unceasing efforts of Congressman Smith.

The most recent results of Congressman Smith's activity in behalf of West Texas was to commit the Department of the Interior to the the creation of a vast irrigation project on the Pecos river, and for this purpose $10,000 has been allotted for making the necessary survey of the Pecos valley, the expedition for which has already been organized.

In various ways, Congressman Smith was able to do handsome things for the cities in his district. For El Paso—the Metropolis of Western Texas—he obtained a $360,000 public building and sites, besides obtaining for Fort Bliss an appropriation of $500,000 for additional barracks and quarters, making it a regimental post. For San Angelo, he obtained a $120,000 building, and for Mineral Wells and Stamford, each, one of $60,000; for Abilene, a $10,000 Weather Bureau and Station, and for Sweetwater he has paved the way for a fine public building by an appropriation of $7,500 for a building site.

But Congressman Smith's services to the people he represents and to the Democratic party, does not rest on the list of material advantages gained for his constituents, but on the intelligence with which he has discussed and voted on the great national problems. His vigorous speech on the tariff has been classed as one of the three best tariff speeches by Democrats in the last 50 years. The other two speeches included in this category were by William Jennings Bryan and former Congressman Heilfeld, who are now in President Wilson's cabinet. So impressed was Mr. Bryan with Congressman Smith's speech on the tariff, that he reproduced it in full in the Commoner, and commended it in glowing terms.

On the subject of railroad rate regulation and trust, regulation, Congressman Smith has been consistently progressive and always right, and the declarations of the Baltimore platform and the recomendations of President Wilson are directly in accord with the bills he introduced and the legislation he urged during his long service on the important committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Congressman Smith violently opposed the subsidy to the shipping trust, in the way of free coastwise traffic through the Panama Canal.

This is such a violation of the treaty obligation and of all Democratic teachings against speical privilege, that President Wilson is striving to uphold the honor of the country and the traditions of the party in his effort to right a grievous wrong.

Such is the record and the standing of W. R. Smith. He is a native of Texas, having been born in Smith county, where he spent the early years of his life upon his father's farm; afterwards beginning the practice of law in Tyler, in the office of Duncan & Hogg, before the latter became Governor of Texas. Mr. Smith has been identified with West Texas since 1888, when he became a citizen of Colorado, his present home. His style of democracy, and his efficiency as a lawyer appealed to Governor Culberson, who appointed him a district judge in 1897, and his fairness and common sense so appealed to the people of his district that they elected him for two more terms, and then, in 1903, sent him to congress, where they have kept him ever since because of his fidelity, integrity and ability. In such a career may well be found double cause for congratulation—Congressman on his record; and the Sixteenth District on its congressman.—Colorado Record.

It is reported that Nebraska will trim its legislature to fit its purse. After a year of arduous labor, the legislative reform committee of that state has filed its report with the Governor. The report suggests that business methods should prevail in legislative affairs and makes some interesting suggestions in this connection. It is suggested that the Nebraska legislature is too unwieldy and that one legislative body could be abandoned altogether and the other greatly curtailed, with great advantage to the state. The report suggesting these changes will be submitted to the next legislature, and if passed the committee memberships in the two houses will be reduced from 751 to 277. The citizens of Nebraska are not only clamoring for few and better laws, but for fewer and better lawmakers as well.

The Cowboy Band and Quartette [illegible]